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SOUTH COUNTY JOINT PLANNING PROGRAM

City of Morgan Hill City of Gilroy County of Santa Clara

AGRICULTURE IN SOUTH COUNTY

BACKGROUND REPORT
FOR THE
SOUTH COUNTY JOINT PLANNING PROGRAM

PREPARED BY: CHERYL REID

COUNTY OF SANTA CLARA
DEPARTMENT OF LAND USE AND DEVELOPMENT
OFFICE OF PLANNING

Adopted: November 14, 1985

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8. AGRICULTURE

Benefits of Agriculture

- 8.1. Agriculture contributes to the economy and quality of life within Santa Clara County. It provides food and fiber to the population, employment opportunities and revenue to the local economy, and open space and aesthetic benefits to the community.
- 8.2. Agriculture is the highest and best use of lands that communities do not have scheduled for development in the immediate future.

Current Situation

- 8.3. Despite the urbanization of most agricultural lands in the North County, agriculture remains an important land use in South County, where the prime soils and benevolent climate continue to produce a wide variety of crops.
- 8.4. The amount of harvested acreage in South County is increasing as farming operations relocate from North County.
- 8.5. The annual total market value of crops produced in Santa Clara County increased 7% in 1984 to \$139.5 million following a four-year period of decline (data adjusted for inflation). The following crops each had real market value increases of at least \$1 million between 1983 and 1984: chicken eggs, cherries, snap beans, wheat, chrysanthemums and wax/chili peppers.
- 8.6. Average annual employment in agricultural farm production in South County has been slowly declining in the past few years. Average annual employment in the food processing industry, however, has remained stable.

Factors Affecting the Future of South County Agriculture

- 8.7. The future economic viability of agriculture in South County will be determined by a variety of factors, and some of which can be affected by local government policies, some of which cannot.
- 8.8. Agriculture has the greatest potential to remain viable where:
 - a. soils and climatic conditions are good,
 - b. neighboring land uses are compatible with agricultural practices,
 - c. land holdings are relatively large,
 - d. land use policies are stable and supportive of the maintenance of agriculture,
 - e. farmers are able to adapt to changing circumstances,
 - f. direct marketing methods are available to and utilized by farmers, and
 - g. land prices are not so high as to make urban development a more attractive option to the owners of farmland.



THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO
DIVISION OF THE PHYSICAL SCIENCES
DEPARTMENT OF CHEMISTRY

REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON THE
PROGRESS OF THE RESEARCH
DURING THE YEAR 1954

THE COMMITTEE ON THE PROGRESS OF THE RESEARCH
DURING THE YEAR 1954
WAS COMPOSED OF THE FOLLOWING MEMBERS:

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DR. R. M. MARRAS, MEMBER

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DR. R. M. MARRAS, MEMBER
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8.9. The greatest local threat to the continued economic viability of agriculture in South County are:

- a. urban encroachment into agricultural areas,
- b. division of agricultural lands into parcels (or holdings) too small to be economically competitive,
- c. introduction of land uses (e.g., residential uses) incompatible with agricultural practices,
- d. uncertainties resulting from unstable local land use policies, and
- e. rapidly increasing land values.

8.10. The South County lands with the greatest potential for long-term agricultural use are the large parcels to the east and south of Gilroy designated as "Large Scale Agriculture" on the County's General Plan.

Agriculture and Urban Growth Needs

8.11. Based upon current forecasts, urban growth needs in South County through the year 2000 can be accommodated on the South Valley floor without significantly infringing upon the prime agricultural areas east and south of Gilroy.

Current Preservation Practices

8.12. At best, the protection afforded agriculture by current County and City preservation policies and methods is short- to medium-term, rather than long-term.

8.13. Current preservation methods are inadequate for the long-term preservation of agriculture.

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14. AGRICULTURE

Agriculture should be continued and supported since it contributes to the local economy and helps to delineate urban boundaries. Among other benefits, it is the most productive use for land which is not immediately planned for urban development. More effective methods of support and preservation should be developed.

The County and the Cities should reaffirm their commitment to the long-term maintenance of agricultural land uses in South County.

- 14.1. The County and the Cities should adopt no policies which are detrimental to agriculture.
- 14.2. The County and the Cities should take positive actions to preserve agricultural lands, for example: exclusive agricultural zoning, transfer of development rights (TDR) programs, and right-to-farm legislation.
- 14.3. The economic viability of agriculture should be maintained using a variety of methods, such as: contiguous urban development, the designation as agricultural lands those lands which are outside of urban areas, minimum lot size designations in agricultural areas, the limitation of land uses in agriculturally designated areas to agriculture and uses necessary for the support of agriculture, and the encouragement of direct marketing methods.
- 14.4. The County and the Cities should consider further whether they want to establish areas for the permanent preservation of agricultural lands and, if so, they should establish programs to accomplish that objective.

Some prime agricultural lands in South County (particularly within the prime agricultural areas east and south of Gilroy) should be preserved for permanent agricultural use through appropriate open space preservation tools.

- 14.5. The County should continue the A-20 and A-40 minimum lot size designations in the agricultural area.
- 14.6. The expansion of the "uses compatible with agriculture" category in County zoning ordinances and Williamson Act policies should be approved only when such additional uses will clearly contribute to the long-term viability of agriculture.

The County and the Cities should plan for further urban growth to occur in areas which will avoid encroachment into those agricultural lands with the greatest long-term potential to remain economically viable.

- 14.7. The conversion of agricultural lands needed for urban growth should occur in an orderly manner to retain the stability and viability of remaining agricultural lands as long as possible.
- 14.8. The Cities should use their policies for urban service area extensions and utility extensions to guide urban growth away from long-term agricultural areas.
- 14.9. The policies of the Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCO) should guide urban development away from those agricultural areas with the greatest potential for long-term economic viability.
- 14.10. Open space buffers should be established between viable agricultural areas and urban expansion areas in order to minimize conflicts arising from the encroachment of urban development into or adjacent to such agricultural areas.

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BACKGROUND REPORT
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**AGRICULTURE
IN SOUTH COUNTY**

DRAFT

COUNTY OF SANTA CLARA
DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT
OFFICE OF PLANNING

July 11, 1985

PREPARED BY:
CHERYL REID

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I. OVERVIEW

For over 200 years, agriculture has contributed to the economy and quality of life within Santa Clara County. It has provided food and fiber to the population, employment opportunities and revenue to the local economy, and open space and aesthetic benefits to the community.

As the county began to change from a primarily agricultural community to a major urban center after World War II, much prime farmland, particularly in North County, was lost to urbanization. The County government began planning for the preservation of this economic and aesthetic resource as early as 1953 by the use of Exclusive Agricultural zoning and the delineation of greenbelts encompassing cities. These efforts, however, did not prevent further development of prime farmland.

Santa Clara County's experience is not unique. Every week, 20,000 acres of farmland in the United States are converted to non-agricultural uses.

The importance of preserving prime farmland for the production of crops was stressed by the International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources, the United Nations Environment Programme, and the World Wildlife Fund in their "World Conservation Strategy," which stated that:

"In view of the scarcity of high quality arable land and the rising demand for food and other agricultural products, land that is most suitable for crops should be reserved for agriculture. This will reduce the pressure on ecologically fragile marginal lands which tend to degrade rapidly beyond their production capacities. However, this requirement may conflict with urban, industrial, energy, or transport policy. There are many examples of prime farmland drowned by dams or lost to airport, roads, factories, or housing.

Without careful planning and zoning, man settlements sited in farming areas are bound to encroach to farmlands as they expand. Such conflict should be anticipated and where possible avoided. Since it is not possible to resite high quality cropland but it is possible to be flexible about the siting of buildings, roads and other structures agriculture as a general rule should have precedence (International Union for conservation of Nature and Natural Resources 1980)."

The majority of the county's remaining agricultural lands lie in South County, where the unique combination of rich, deep alluvial soil, plentiful water supply, Mediterranean climate, and long growing season continues to produce high yields of a wide variety of crops.

The agricultural industry in South County has been slowly expanding since 1980, and based upon current forecasts by the Association of Bay Area Governments (ABAG), urban growth needs in South County through the year 2000 can be accommodated on the Valley floor without significantly infringing upon the prime agricultural areas east and south of Gilroy. This does not ensure the continued viability of South County agriculture, however, for the future of agriculture will be affected by local land use policies, marketing methods, economic and market factors, and the adaptability of farmers.

This report on agriculture in South County addresses the following issues:

- Can agriculture and urban growth coexist in South County?
- Should the Cities and the County work to maintain agriculture as a long-term land use in South County?
- Should the Cities and the County make additional efforts to maintain some agricultural areas "permanently?"
- Which lands should remain in long-term or permanent agricultural use?

Benefits of Agriculture

1. Agriculture contributes to the economy and quality of life within Santa Clara County. It provides food and fiber to the population, employment opportunities and revenue to the local economy, and open space and aesthetic benefits to the community.

Current Situation

2. Despite the urbanization of most agricultural lands in the North County, agriculture remains an important land use in South County, where the prime soils and benevolent climate continue to produce a wide variety of crops.
3. The amount of harvested acreage in South County is increasing as farming operations relocate from North County.
4. The annual total market value of crops produced in Santa Clara County increased 13% in 1984 to \$139.5 million following a four-year period of stability.
5. Average annual employment in agricultural farm production in South County has been slowly declining in the past few years. Average annual employment in the food processing industry, however, has remained stable.

Factors Affecting the Future of South County Agriculture

6. The future economic viability of agriculture in South County will be determined by a variety of factors, some of which can be affected by local government policies, some of which cannot.

7. Agriculture has the greatest potential to remain viable where:
 - a. Soils and climatic conditions are good,
 - b. Neighboring land uses are compatible with agricultural practices,
 - c. Land holdings are relatively large,
 - d. Land use policies are stable and supportive of the maintenance of agriculture,
 - e. Farmers are able to adapt to changing circumstances,
 - f. Direct marketing methods are available to and utilized by farmers, and
 - g. Land prices are not so high as to make urban development a more attractive option to the owners of farmland.
8. The greatest local threat to the continued economic viability of agriculture in South County are:
 - a. Urban encroachment into agricultural areas,
 - b. Division of agricultural lands into parcels (or holdings) too small to be economically competitive,
 - c. Introduction of land uses (e.g., residential uses) incompatible with agricultural practices,
 - d. Uncertainties resulting from unstable local land use policies, and
 - e. Rapidly increasing land values.
9. The South County lands with the greatest potential for long-term agricultural use are the large parcels to the east and south of Gilroy designated as "Large Scale Agriculture" on the County's General Plan.

Agriculture and Urban Growth Needs

10. Based upon current forecasts, urban growth needs in South County through the year 2000 can be accommodated on the South Valley floor without significantly infringing upon the prime agricultural areas east and south of Gilroy.

Current Preservation Practices

11. At best, the protection afforded agriculture by current county and city preservation policies and methods is medium to long-term, rather than permanent.

II. THE CURRENT STATUS OF AGRICULTURE

A. Evaluation Criteria

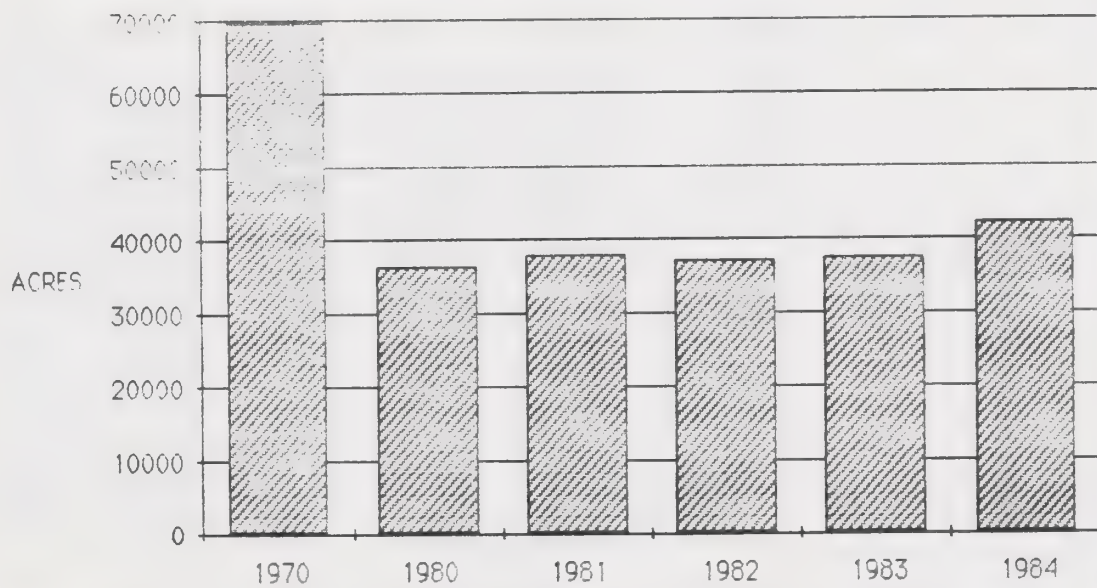
The current status of agriculture must be assessed before a determination of whether/how to preserve agriculture can be made. Looking at the loss of farmland in North County, it is easy to form the perception that agriculture is a rapidly declining industry in this county. However, the focus of this report is on South County, and the amount of land used for agricultural production is only one criteria among many for assessing the current situation. Other evaluation criteria are the total market value of crops, trends for individual crops, agricultural employment, and agriculture as a portion of the county's economy.

B. Harvested Acreage

Following a large decrease between 1970 and 1980, the amount of harvested cropland in Santa Clara County in 1984 totaled 43,086 acres (not including pasture and rangeland). This figure represents an increase of 5,932 acres (16.4%) over the 1980 total (see Figure A).

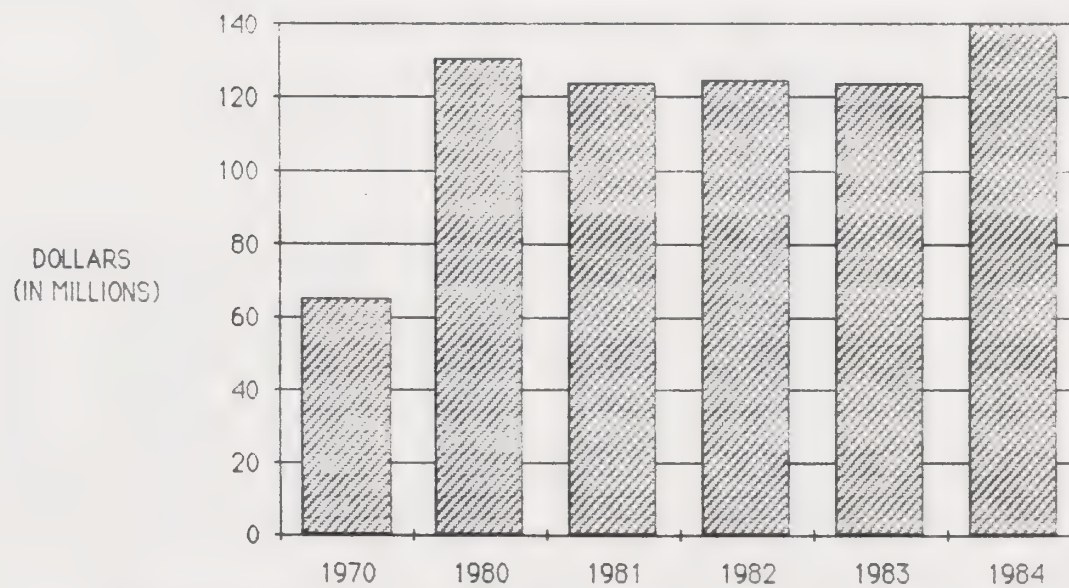
The majority of this newly harvested acreage is in South County. According to Greg Van Wassenhove, Santa Clara County Agricultural Commissioner, farming operations which have relocated after leaving North County comprise the majority of South County's increased agricultural acreage.

FIGURE A
HARVESTED ACREAGE - SANTA CLARA COUNTY



Source: County Crop Reports (data does not include pasture and rangeland)

FIGURE B
MARKET VALUE OF CROPS - SANTA CLARA COUNTY



Source: County Crop Reports

C. Total Market Value of Crops

The annual total market value of crops produced in Santa Clara County increased in 1984 following a four-year period of stability. 1984's total market value of \$139.5 million was a 13% increase over the 1983 figure (see Figure B).

D. Trends for Individual Crops

Crops and agricultural commodities produced in South County can be grouped into eleven categories: fruits and nuts, wine grapes, vegetables, cut flowers, outdoor grown nursery crops, berries, field crops, livestock and poultry, livestock and poultry products, seed crops, and honey and bees wax. The following is a summary of crop trends from 1980 to 1984:

Fruits and Nuts - Once the symbol of Santa Clara County agriculture, the fruits and nuts category has lost 3,777 harvested acres (34.8%) since 1980, the largest loss of any crop category. While production has remained fairly steady, the market value of fruits and nuts has increased slightly. Since many of the remaining orchards lie within city urban service areas, however, their continued existence is endangered.

wine Grapes - Because American wines are facing increasing competition from inexpensive foreign wines, the growing of wine grapes in this country is not the profitable business it was a few years ago. Even a decrease in the size of the nation's crop in 1984 (from 3.1 million tons to 2.6 million tons) did not halt the decrease in wine grape prices which began in 1982. Growers in South County, however, are faring well since the total acreage is not large and they contract with local wineries for the sale of their crops.

Vegetables- Vegetables have traditionally been one of the county's most important agricultural crop categories; the 22 varieties of locally-grown vegetables listed in the County Crop Report had a market value of \$41,287,000 in 1984. Vegetable production, harvested acreage, and market value have been stable following a large decrease in harvested acreage and production in 1981.

Cut Flowers - Cut flowers is Santa Clara County's leading agricultural crop as measured by total market value. The amount of greenhouse square footage used for cut flower production declined in the recent past, but now appears to be increasing slightly as operations move from North County to South County. This crop's market value has remained stable since 1980.

Outdoor Grown Nursery Crops - This agricultural category includes bedding plants, Christmas trees, ornamental trees, roses, and shrubs and is one segment of South County agriculture which is expanding. Field acreage, production, and total market value have all increased significantly since 1980.

Berries - Production of bushberries and strawberries utilizes very little of the county's agricultural land (331 harvested acres in 1984), but strawberries are one of the leading individual crops in the county in terms of their market value. Berries appears to be an expanding crop category.

Field Crops - This agricultural category consists of barley, hay (alfalfa and grain), wheat, and sugar beets. Since 1980, the county's total amount of harvested acreage of field crops (not including pasture and rangeland) has increased by 11,345 acres (117%). Approximately one-half of this increase was in South County. Field crop farming generally utilizes land which is not suitable for more intensive farming.

Livestock and Poultry - This agricultural category, which mostly utilizes marginal lands rather than improved or irrigated pasture lands, appears to be stable. An increase in the market value of chickens, sheep, and lambs is partially offsetting a decrease in the market value of cattle, the major crop in this category.

Livestock and Poultry Products - This agricultural category consists of eggs, fresh milk, and processed milk and had a stable market value from 1980 to 1983. A higher total market value in 1984 was mainly the result of a large increase in egg production.

Seed Crops - The amount of seed crops produced and the amount of harvested acreage used in production are both decreasing slightly. For the county as a whole, the market value of this crop category decreased 27.8% (from \$2,000,000 to \$1,565,000) between 1983 and 1984.

Honey and Bees Wax - After decreasing between 1980 and 1982, the total market value of this agricultural category has been steadily increasing due to large increases in honey production.

E. Employment

Another measure of the current status of agriculture in South County is the number of persons employed in farming and the food processing industry. Average annual employment in agricultural farm production in South County has been slowly declining in the past few years. For the County as a whole, the figure decreased from 6400 persons in 1980 to 4800 persons in 1984. This 25% decrease reflects the following trends:

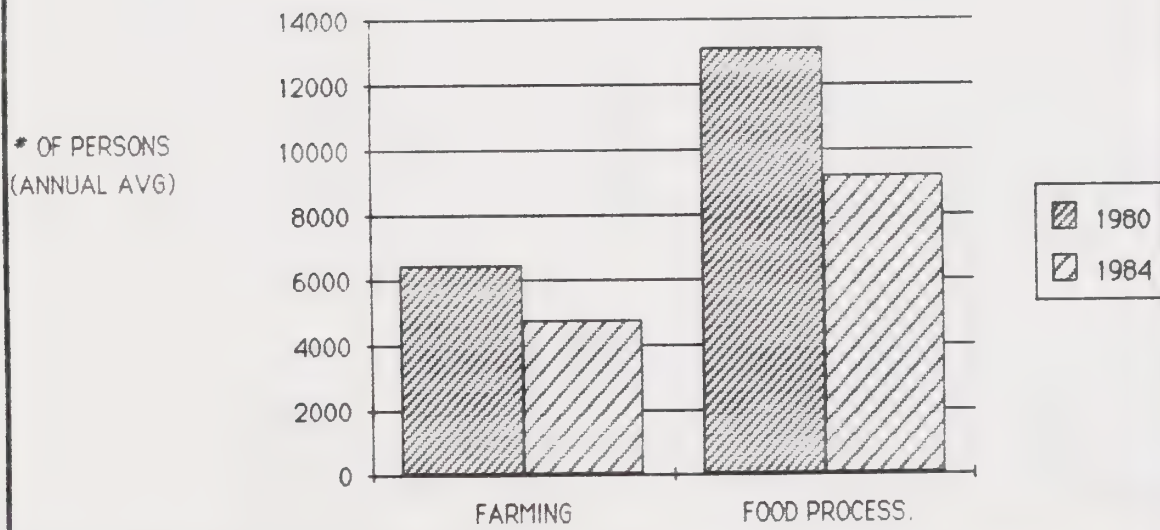
- With increased labor costs, some farmers are planting only those crops which can be harvested mechanically, such as tomatoes, and
- Some lands have been taken out of farm production due to the increased cost of agricultural production, the value of the land for other uses, and the movement of operations to other parts of the state, particularly the San Joaquin Valley and the Fresno and Modesto areas.

Average annual employment in the food processing industry remained stable in South County between 1980 and 1984, although the county as a whole has experienced a large decrease (from 13,100 to 9200 persons) due to the closure of canneries in North County (see Figure C).

F. Agriculture as a Portion of the County's Economy

Since the 1950's, Santa Clara County has been one of the fastest growing areas in the country in terms of both population and employment, and this rapid growth is expected to continue through the year 2000. The Association of Bay Area Governments anticipates that the majority of the county's economic growth will be in the manufacturing and wholesale sectors. Therefore, as a portion of the county's economy, agriculture is declining.

FIGURE C
COUNTY-WIDE AGRICULTURAL EMPLOYMENT



Source: Employment Development Department

This is perhaps not a valid comparison, however, for based upon the evaluation criteria presented above, agriculture in South County appears to be stable. In addition, agriculture is still very important to a segment of the population, such as persons employed in farming and food processing.

G. Non-Economic Measures of the Importance of Agriculture

The evaluation criteria discussed above represent the economic benefits of agriculture. The following are some of agriculture's non-economic benefits:

- The delineation of urban growth patterns, and thus the promotion of orderly growth,
- The maintenance of air quality,
- The provision of open space protection for lands, and
- The provision of an aesthetic resource to the community.

III. FACTORS AFFECTING THE FUTURE OF AGRICULTURE IN SOUTH COUNTY

A. Pressure for Conversion

According to the Association of Bay Area Governments' (ABAG) "Projections '83" and "Projections '85," slightly more than 5,000 acres of land in South County will be needed between 1980 and the year 2000 for a combination of the following land uses: residential, commercial/industrial/other, and streets and highways. ABAG's data is based on densities allowed under current policies.

Urban growth in South County will increase the value of prime agricultural lands, for such lands are generally well-drained, flat, and stable, making them well-suited for development.

B. Local Land Use Policies

Incompatible Uses

When land within agricultural areas is converted to rural-residential use, problems of incompatibility result. Agricultural and residential land uses are incompatible for several reasons:

- The price of farmland increases when residential activity is nearby. This prevents many farmers from increasing their land holdings and makes the sale of land for development an attractive option to farmland owners.
- The dust, noise, spraying, and smells of farming can be unpleasant to homeowners.
- Farmers are disturbed by pets, trespassing, vandalism, theft, and complaints from the residential population.

Parcel Size

For many crops, the current economic situation favors large agricultural operations since specialized machinery can be used to achieve economies of scale. Small farm operators, in contrast, have difficulties meeting the costs of labor and traditional farm equipment.

Another problem faced by small operators is the availability of financing. Small operators can have difficulty obtaining credit due to competition with large farms and other organizations and the problem of paying both high interest rates and farm production costs. Farmers who own many small parcels find it easier to receive credit since they have the option of selling or leasing one or more parcels to increase their cash flow while maintaining their farming operation.

Stability of Local Land Use Policies

The stability of local land use policies is one of the keys to agricultural preservation. Without clear policies, farmers are uncertain about the future of their land, and this uncertainty may result in decreased agricultural investment. For example, farmers will be very hesitant to invest in new equipment or in new trees which will not bear fruit for several years if the continued use of their land for agricultural production is not ensured. Also, faced with an uncertain economic future, farmers may choose to sell their lands for conversion to another use, such as rural-residential or urban development.

C. Marketing

Farmers can increase their profits by direct sales to produce markets and/or direct on-farm sales to consumers. These direct marketing methods are especially important for the economic viability of small farms.

Most of the major retailers and processors in the Bay region purchase their produce from growers outside of the area. In Santa Clara County, however, wine grape growers contract with local wineries for the sale of their crops and are thus faring better than growers in other areas who sell their wine grapes to wholesalers.

Many counties have farm trail organizations that publicize on-farm produce stands and related retail outlets. "Country Crossroads" in Santa Clara and Santa Cruz Counties has over 60 member farms. Maps of "Country Crossroads" farms, distributed by the Farm Bureau, contain the following information: the location of the member farms, the type(s) of produce available at each farm, and the time of the year the farms sell to consumers.

D. Economic and Market Factors

Local government can significantly affect the future of agriculture through its land use policies, but it cannot control all of the factors which affect agriculture's viability. Among the economic and market factors local government cannot control are:

- Competition with other states,
- Foreign competition,
- Consumer tastes and demands,
- The market price of agricultural products,
- Increases in farm production costs, and
- The market price of land.

E. Adaptability of Farmers

Another factor which will affect the future of agriculture in South County is the ability and willingness of farmers to adapt to changing conditions. The following are examples of changes that some South County farmers are currently making:

- Planting crops which can be harvested mechanically in order to save labor costs,
- Planting crops for which there is a greater demand relative to supply,
- Selling products directly to consumers and/or produce markets, and
- Farming through land leasing rather than land purchasing because of high land prices.

F. The Flexibility Dilemma

Farmers claim that they cannot continue to farm unless their lands are not restricted to agricultural use. They say, for example, that they need the flexibility to be able to sell off small parcels from their lands.

Allowing this flexibility, however, poses a major dilemma because it can lead to smaller agricultural parcels and the introduction of incompatible uses, both of which work against the continued economic viability of agriculture and may hasten the demise of agriculture in the area.

G. The Future of South County Agriculture: A Summary

Agriculture has the greatest potential to remain viable where:

- Soils and climatic conditions are good,
- Neighboring land uses are compatible with agricultural
- practices,

- - Parcels are relatively large,
- - Land use policies are stable and supportive of the maintenance of agriculture,
- - Direct marketing methods are available to and utilized by farmers, and
- Farmers are able to adapt to changing circumstances.

Conversely, the greatest local threats to the continued economic viability of agriculture in South County are:

- Urban encroachment into agricultural areas,
- Division of agricultural lands into parcels too small to be economically competitive,
- Introduction of land uses (e.g., residential uses) incompatible with agricultural practices,
- Uncertainties resulting from unstable local land use policies, and
- Rapidly increasing land values.

IV. CURRENT POLICIES REGARDING AGRICULTURE

A. City and County General Plans

Localities express their policies toward agriculture in their general plans. The following is a summary of the general plan policies of the Cities of Gilroy and Morgan Hill and the County of Santa Clara (The policies are presented in Appendix A):

1. Basic Policies Regarding Agriculture

The general plans of the County of Santa Clara, the City of Gilroy, and the City of Morgan Hill state that agriculture is a valuable economic and aesthetic resource and a productive use of lands which should be kept as open space due to safety or environmental constraints. The general plans also state that the continued economic viability of local agriculture should be protected.

In addition, Gilroy's general plan states that, "Land use regulations under County jurisdiction should require minimum lot sizes to protect the viability of local agriculture and to prevent the development of incompatible or undesirable land use patterns prior to eventual annexation and urbanization."

2. Policies Regarding Lands to be Designated for Agricultural Use

County of Santa Clara - Large areas of parcels in the 40-200 acre range exist only to the east and south of Gilroy and are designated in the County's current General Plan as "Large Scale Agriculture." The remainder of South Valley floor (not including Coyote Valley or the San Martin rural-residential area) has parcels of 20-40 acres and is designated as "Medium Scale Agriculture."

To establish a stable land use pattern and prevent the premature conversion of agricultural lands to higher densities, sizeable acres of agricultural land in large parcels shall be preserved. Agriculture shall also be encouraged on lands which should be kept in open space due to safety or environmental constraints.

City of Gilroy - Agriculture will be encouraged on lands subject to natural hazards and on undeveloped lands within the City's Planning Area.

City of Morgan Hill - All land which is located more than one-half mile from existing urban development and which consists of Grade 1 and Grade 2 soils (Storie Index rating) or Class 1 and 2 soils (USDA rating) shall be designated as Phased Urban and shall have a 20 acre minimum lot size.

3. Policies to Prevent Incompatible Land Uses

County of Santa Clara - In recognition of the agricultural/residential land use incompatibility, the Santa Clara County General Plan states that all land uses in agriculturally designated areas are to be compatible with agriculture and that those parts of the Valley which have been subdivided into small lots over a vast area are rural-residential areas, not agricultural areas.

City of Gilroy - "Amend the Zoning Ordinance to permit intensive agriculture operations as long term uses in industrially designated areas where such uses are compatible with adjacent existing and planned uses."

"Urbanization will be contained within an area large enough to meet foreseeable need but which will not intrude unnecessarily on, or cause premature conversion or impair the productivity of, agricultural lands."

City of Morgan Hill - "Land uses within a one-half mile buffer area between existing urban development and Grades 1 and 2 soils shall be regulated pursuant to a new ordinance which shall specify those land uses necessary to buffer between urban and agricultural uses."

4. Special Programs to Maintain Agriculture

The following special programs have been identified in the County and City general plan policies and/or implementation strategies as examples of programs aimed at maintaining agriculture as a long-term land use:

County of Santa Clara

- recombining agricultural parcels to make economic farming units
- securing a direct public interest in the land, such as open space easement and density transfer
- cooperating with private and public organizations to promote the economic development and revitalization of agricultural areas.

City of Gilroy

- recognizing and assisting the needs of local farmers
- encouraging the agricultural use of reclaimed water and sewage sludge.

City of Morgan Hill

- providing agricultural information services
- encouraging the use of locations within the City for the direct sale of produce from farmers to consumers.

B. Agricultural Zoning

Zoning is the most common method used by local governments to prevent non-agricultural uses on agricultural land. Zoning establishes both the permitted uses within an area and the minimum parcel size into which land may be subdivided. To reflect the diversity of agricultural lands, the County has four types of agricultural zoning districts: 1) "A" Exclusive Agricultural (Greenbelt), 2) "A1" Residential and Agricultural, 3) "AR" Agricultural Ranchlands, and 4) "HS" Hillsides.

C. Williamson Act

The California Land Conservation (Williamson) Act of 1965 was enacted by the State Legislature to preserve agricultural land. Under the act, landowners voluntarily sign a ten-year contract, automatically renewed annually, to keep their land in agricultural use in exchange for tax rates based on agricultural value rather than highest and best use evaluation. Approximately 370,000 acres of land in Santa Clara County were under Williamson Act contracts in 1984.

The minimum parcel size for lands entering Williamson Act contracts is 10 acres if the land is prime and 40 acres if it is non-prime. The contract continues if the land is sold.

Proposition 13 reduced the actual dollar amount of tax savings for lands under Williamson Act contracts, but the percent of the tax difference between Williamson Act lands and non-Williamson Act lands has remained at approximately 50% (i.e., lands under Williamson Act contracts pay approximately 50% less than similar lands not under such contracts).

D. Urban Development Policy

The urban development policies of cities provide another form of protection for the maintenance of agriculture. These policies are expressed through several different vehicles: general plans, zoning, urban service area boundaries, and utility (i.e., sewer and water) extension plans and policies.

When agricultural lands are included within a city's urban service area boundaries and utilities are extended into the area, the continued use of the lands for agricultural production is threatened by urban growth. Cities can therefore use their urban development policies to guide development away from those prime agricultural areas with the best potential for retaining their long-term economic viability.

Local Agency Formation Commissions (LAFCOs) were created by the Knox -Nisbet Act of 1963 to control the growth and development of cities.

LAFCOs review proposals for changes in government organization, including city annexations. Each LAFCO also identifies "spheres of influence," the probable ultimate physical boundaries and urban service areas of local government agencies.

As specified by Knox-Nisbet, the five member Santa Clara LAFCO considers such factors as the following when reviewing proposals for changes in government organization: the likelihood of significant growth, conformity with appropriate city or county general and specific plans, and the effect of the proposed action (and of alternative actions) on both adjacent areas and lands in the agricultural preserve in open space use (see Appendix B). Using these powers and policies, Santa Clara LAFCO can thus control the growth and development of cities within the county and prevent the premature development of agricultural lands.

E. State Programs to Preserve Agriculture

In recent years, there have been numerous state proposals and programs to prevent the unnecessary conversion of prime agricultural lands to other uses (the Williamson Act, for example). The most recent of these programs is the Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program, which was initiated by the Department of Conservation in 1980 to monitor the conversion of California's farmland from (and to) agricultural use. To achieve this goal, the Department worked with the United States Department of Agriculture Soil Conservation Service to prepare "Important Farmland Series Maps" showing farmland and urban areas in 40 of the state's agricultural counties, including Santa Clara County. These maps were published in 1984 and will be revised annually.

Eight classifications of land are used in the Important Farmlands Maps:

- (P) Prime Farmland
- (S) Farmland of Statewide Importance
- (U) Unique Farmland
- (L) Farmland of Local Importance
- (G) Grazing Lands
- (D) Urban and Built-up land
- (X) Other Land (see Appendix C for land classification definitions).

Prime farmland exists in scattered parcels throughout the South County study area, but is found in the largest acreage in the areas to the east and south of Gilroy.

Although the monitoring of farmland conversion does not directly preserve agriculture, the identification and mapping of farmland quality is an aid to other preservation programs.

F. The Current Level of Protection: Long-term or Permanent?

At best, the protection afforded agriculture by preservation methods currently employed in Santa Clara County is medium to long-term, rather than permanent, for the following reasons:

- General plans, zoning ordinances, and urban development policies can be amended, and
- Williamson Act contracts can be cancelled or nonrenewed.

It may even be inaccurate to say that the current level of protection guarantees "medium" to "long-term" protection for agricultural lands since general plans and zoning designations can be changed by a simple majority of the County Board of Supervisors or a city council.

V. ISSUES AND OPTIONS

A. Can Agriculture and Urban Growth Coexist in South County?

It is sometimes assumed that urban growth in South County will inevitably drive agriculture out of the area. In the short- to mid-range future, however, this need not be true. If urban development in South County is well-planned and orderly, growth through the year 2000 can be accommodated on the South Valley floor without significantly infringing upon the prime agricultural areas east and south of Gilroy.

B. Should the Cities and the County Work to Maintain Agriculture as a Long-Term Land Use in South County?

Option #1: YES

With orderly growth patterns, agriculture can remain viable in South County for many years. The lands which should remain in long-term agricultural use are those which are not presently needed for development.

A combination of the following preservation tools will preserve agriculture as a long-term land use:

a. Land Use Planning

Land use planning is the precursor to land use regulation. The land use plan, which shows those lands which have been designated for agricultural use, is where the initial commitment to agricultural preservation is made and is a framework for land use policies and regulations.

- b. Land Use Regulations. Examples: The establishment of minimum parcel sizes and the limitation of land uses in agriculturally designated areas to agriculture, to uses necessary for the support of agriculture, and to uses compatible with agriculture.
- c. Economic Incentives to Keep Land in Agricultural Use. Example: The Williamson Act.
- d. Urban Development Policies. Ensuring that urban service areas and utility extension policies work together and that new development is either contiguous to existing developed land or of the infill variety.
- e. Facilitating direct marketing of local agricultural products. Examples: securing lands for markets at no cost to farmers and establishing a program for the direct purchase of local produce by schools, community colleges, correctional facilities, and other institutions.
- f. Density Transfer ("transfer of development rights"). The concept of density transfer requires that two types of areas be established: an agricultural area which is to be restricted, and a residential area which is to be developed. A landowner within the residential area would only be allowed to develop his land at a low density unless he first purchases a "development credit" from a landowner in the restricted agricultural area. The agricultural landowner would be authorized to sell development credits only after first conveying a permanent open space easement over the farmland to the county. The value of the density credits would be set by the private market.

Although viewed by many as a permanent preservation technique, a density transfer program will provide only long-term protection since it has the potential to be abandoned if declared ineffective.

Option #2: NO

The Cities and the County should not work to maintain agriculture as a long-term land use in South County. Agricultural lands can be equally considered for development.

C. Should the Cities and the County Make Additional Efforts to Maintain Some Agricultural Areas "Permanently"?

Option #1: YES

Some lands in South County should remain in agricultural use forever. A program for permanent preservation includes the components of a long-term preservation program, but in addition it requires that the public secure a direct interest in the land, such as the purchase of development rights (PDR).

If a landowner holds the title to development rights, he may develop his property to the degree for which it is zoned. If he sells these rights, he is prohibited from developing his land.

One alternative to a traditional PDR program is for the public to purchase both the land and the development rights and then lease only the land.

Although the public purchase of development rights is one of the most permanent means of preserving agricultural lands, it is very expensive.

Option #2: NO

The Cities and the County should not make additional efforts to retain some agricultural areas "permanently." Not only is permanent preservation very expensive, but the lands which are preserved may be needed at some point in the future to accomodate urban growth.

D. Which Lands Should Remain in Long-Term or Permanent Agricultural Use?

Agricultural lands in South County are diverse in terms of parcel size, soil quality, proximity to existing urban development, and neighboring uses. What are the characteristics of those lands which should remain in agricultural use?

Option #1: All agricultural lands with prime (P) soils.

Option #2: Those lands which have the following combination of factors and thus the greatest potential for long-term or permanent agricultural use:

- lands not presently needed for urban development
- lands in large parcels
- lands with prime soils
- lands with compatible neighboring land uses

The South County lands with the greatest potential for long-term or permanent agricultural use are the large parcels to the east and south of Gilroy designated as "Large Scale Agriculture" on the County's General Plan.

RECOMMENDATIONS

COUNTY AND CITIES

1. The Advisory Committee should recommend that the County and the Cities reaffirm their commitment to the long-term maintenance of agricultural land uses in South County. To implement this policy, the County and the Cities should plan for further urban growth to occur in areas which will avoid encroachment into those agricultural lands with the greatest long-term potential to remain economically viable.
2. The Advisory Committee should recommend that the conversion of agricultural lands needed for urban growth occur in an orderly manner to retain the stability and viability of remaining agricultural lands as long as possible.
3. The Advisory Committee should recommend that the County and the Cities decide during plan consolidation whether they want to establish areas for the permanent preservation of agricultural lands and, if so, establish programs to accomplish that objective.

COUNTY

4. The Advisory Committee should recommend that the County discourage further division of lands within agricultural areas and further encroachment of ranchettes and other incompatible uses into agricultural areas.
5. The Advisory Committee should recommend that the expansion of the "uses compatible with agriculture" category in County zoning ordinances and Williamson Act policies be approved only when such additional uses will clearly contribute to the long-term viability of agriculture.

6. The Advisory Committee should recommend that the Cities use their policies for urban service area extensions and utility extensions to guide urban growth away from long-term agricultural areas.

LAFCO

7. The Advisory Committee should recommend that the policies of the Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCO) guide urban development away from those agricultural areas with the greatest potential for long-term economic viability.

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Bob Ottobani, Employment Development Department

Ricka Piranni, Employment Development Department

Greg Van Wassenhove, Santa Clara County Agricultural Commissioner

BACKGROUND REPORT
FOR THE
SOUTH COUNTY JOINT PLANNING PROGRAM

**AGRICULTURE
IN SOUTH COUNTY**



TECHNICAL APPENDIX

DRAFT

COUNTY OF SANTA CLARA
DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT
OFFICE OF PLANNING

July 11, 1985

PREPARED BY:
CHERYL REID

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APPENDIX A

General Plan Policies and Implementation

Note: Following each policy is the page number of the respective general plan on which the policy may be found.

Basic Policies Regarding Agricultural Preservation

County of Santa Clara

Agriculture shall be encouraged for the vital contributions which agricultural production makes to the economy and quality of life within the county, including:

- a. The production of food and fiber,
- b. Retention of food production near the urban population, and
- c. Maintenance of a source of continued renewing wealth within the county (page D20).

Sizable areas of prime agricultural land in large parcels shall be preserved to achieve the stability necessary for those wishing to conduct agricultural operations, including:

- a. Establishment of a stable land use pattern in which each agriculturalist may be assured that surrounding lands will also be used for agriculture and that the land use pattern will remain stable enough to justify major agricultural investments,
- b. Allowing for the re-entry into agriculture of persons wanting to farm in the county,

- c. Improvement of opportunities for earning a livelihood through the productive use of rural lands, and
- d. Avoidance of non-compatible residential uses in agricultural areas (page D20).

City of Gilroy

Support land use and transportation policies and zoning regulations in lands under county jurisdiction within the City's sphere of influence which protect the continued viability of local agriculture. Discourage splitting up of properties by new roads or into parcels too small to be used economically for agricultural purposes, and the premature conversion of agricultural lands to higher densities until such lands are annexed by the City (page III-10).

City of Morgan Hill

Open space definition. All land with open space potential as documented in the Environmental Constraints and Resources Inventory of the Open Space/Conservation Element shall be designated on the Open Space/Conservation Element Map as one of the following land uses:

- a. ~~Wetlands~~
- b. Ridgelines

c. Phased Urban: This open space category would allow a 20 acre minimum lot size. Phased Urban usage which is important for the production of food and fiber where Class 1 and 2 soils exist; or land which is not needed for urban growth within the next 5 years. The Phased Urban areas should be examined annually in conjunction with 5-year urban service area adjustments and annexation requests. The purpose and intent of such a phased urban category is to:

- Coincide with Williamson Act contracts;
- Inform those in this classification that there is no immediate potential for urban development;
- Provide for the managed production of resources, including but not limited to forest lands, range lands, agricultural lands, and areas of economic importance for the production of food and fiber as indicated in Section 65560 (b) (2) of the Open Space Lands Act;
- Maintain a 20 acre minimum lot size;
- The Phased Urban area shall control the premature conversion of agricultural land to urban uses, it is also intended to buffer agriculture from urban uses. It will discourage noncontiguous development patterns which unnecessarily increase the costs of community services to community residents.

d. Agricultural Buffer Zones: Land uses within the one-half mile buffer area between existing urban development and Grade 1 and 2 soils shall be regulated pursuant to a new ordinance which shall specify those land uses necessary to buffer between urban and agricultural uses.

- e. Floodways/Floodplain Open Space
- f. Alquist-Priolo Open Space
- g. Wildlife Habitat Areas (pages 81-82).

Policies Regarding Lands to be Designated for Agricultural Use

Policies

County of Santa Clara

Agriculture shall be encouraged so that there will be productive use of lands which must be designated as open space, including:

- a. Lands not planned to receive urban services,
- b. Lands subject to safety risks such as flooding,
- c. Lands to be left open for the retention of air quality,
- d. Lands contributing to the natural recharge of ground water,
- e. Lands in uses able to accept reclaimed water,
- f. Lands in which the retention of very light populations can minimize financial impacts on school districts, fire districts, and other public agencies serving the rural areas,
- g. Open lands needed to restrict urban sprawl and to give a buffer area between cities, and

- h. Lands to serve the public good through the aesthetic, psychological, and cultural benefits which open land provides.

The remaining areas of agriculturally used prime soils in areas not committed to urban or residential use shall be preserved in the large parcels with continued agricultural use (page D20).

(The minimum parcel size for any new subdivision in the large scale agricultural areas is 40 acres - 20 acres in areas designated as medium scale agriculture).

City of Morgan Hill

All land consisting of Grade 1 and 2 soils according to the Storie Index rating or as Class 1 and 2 soils (USDA rating) and as shown on the Agricultural Soils map of the Open Space and Conservation Element of the City of Morgan Hill shall be designated as Phased Urban where such land is located more than one-half mile from existing urban development (page 28).

Implementation

City of Gilroy

The City will oppose urban development in lands under County jurisdiction until such lands are annexed by the City. Land use regulations under County jurisdiction should require minimum lot sizes to protect the viability of local agriculture and to prevent the development of incompatible or undesirable land use patterns prior to eventual annexation and urbanization (page III-5).

Agriculture will be encouraged in undeveloped portions of the Planning Area. Community gardens, food production, seed production and other intensive agricultural operations will be allowed as long term uses when compatible with adjacent existing or planned land use (page III-5).

Areas subject to natural hazards such as major flooding or soils with a high water table will be encouraged to remain in long-term agricultural production where such use exists (page III-5).

Policies to Prevent Incompatible Land Uses

Policies

County of Santa Clara

Land uses in agriculturally designated areas shall be limited to agriculture, uses necessary for the support of agriculture, and uses compatible with agriculture (page D20).

(There have been a few exceptions to this policy, such as the allowance of commercial uses in an agricultural area along Monterey Highway.)

Residential uses in agricultural areas shall be allowed for those persons directly involved in the farming operations and for non-agricultural applications which enhance the long-term viability of the area for agriculture (page D20).

Housing for farm workers and farm cooperations shall be provided for in the zoning of agricultural areas (page D20).

City of Gilroy

Amend the Zoning Ordinance to permit intensive agriculture operations as long term uses in industrially designated areas where such uses are compatible with adjacent existing and planned uses (page III-10).

City of Morgan Hill

Land uses within the one-half mile buffer area between existing urban development and Grades 1 and 2 soils shall be regulated pursuant to a new ordinance which shall specify those land uses necessary to buffer between urban and agricultural uses (page 79).

Implementation

County of Santa Clara

Review and modify permitted uses within agricultural zoning districts to assure that all uses in agricultural areas are compatible with farming (page D21).

Review and amend the provisions of the zoning ordinance governing the creation of residential building sites in agricultural areas to assure that only residences for farm-related persons or residential applications with a long term benefit to the agricultural area are permitted (page D21). (The County is currently being pressure to change this policy).

City of Gilroy

Urbanization will be contained within an area large enough to meet foreseeable need but which will not intrude unnecessarily on, or cause premature conversion or impair the productivity of, agricultural lands (Page III-5).

City of Morgan Hill

Encourage use of farming co-operatives as community project within agricultural buffer areas by lease or dedication in order to implement Title VIII, Chapter 6-501 B2 and B3 (page 79).

As a part of the update of the Land Use Element of the General Plan readjust the urban service boundary to accurately reflect the 5 year capital improvement plan for the city (page 79).

As a part of the update of the Land Use Element of the General Plan establish a 15 year Urban Reserve Area beyond the 5 year Urban Service Area (page 79).

Provide public information concerning benefits of Williamson Act farming co-ops and other agricultural information services (use City of Davis and other activity pro-agricultural cities as a reference (page 79)).

Policies Regarding Special Programs to Preserve Agriculture

Policies

C _____ Santa Clara

The recombining of agricultural parcels to make economic farming units shall be encouraged (page D20).

(The County is allowing, though not encouraging, the recombining of parcels).

The areas of greatest farm viability, including the land to the south and east of Gilroy and portions of the Coyote Valley should be permanently preserved for agricultural use through public programs to secure a direct interest in the land, such as open space easements and density transfer. (page D20).

(Open space easements are available but are not actively promoted by the County; a density transfer program is still under consideration).

The County shall continue to support programs of agricultural technical assistance and shall cooperate with public and private organizations to promote the economic development of the agricultural areas by encouraging projects such as farmers markets, farm cooperatives, and low cost farm worker housing (page D20).

City of Gilroy

Cooperate and work with the County and other agencies in recognizing and assisting the needs of local farmers.

Encourage the agricultural use of reclaimed water and sewage sludge (page III-10).

Implementation

County of Santa Clara

Encourage the efforts of private groups in the economic development and revitalization of the agricultural areas in the County by endorsing the creation of:

- a. A non-profit agricultural lands leasing corporation, etc.,
- b. A community development corporation to provide technical, legal, and financial assistance to small farmers, cooperatives, and rural development projects,
- c. A business investment development corporation, funded by member institutions (banks, savings and loan associations, Small Business Administration, Office of Minority Business Enterprise, etc.) to promote agricultural economic development by spreading loan risk among lenders (page D21).
(No action has been taken on this policy to date).

Create a program of density transfer to permanently preserve South Valley farm land. Establish a task force to determine the areas for use in the program and to explore with cities the use of density transfer for high density urban housing (page D21).

(A density transfer program is still under consideration).

City of Morgan Hill

Revise Agricultural Ordinance to expand list of uses permitted and set minimum lot size of 20 acres in unincorporated areas (page 78).

As a part of the update of the Land Use Element of the General Plan readjust the urban service boundary to accurately reflect the 5 year capital improvement plan for the city (page 78).

As a part of the update of the Land Use Element of the General Plan establish a 15 year urban reserve area beyond the 5 year urban service area (page 78).

Provide public information concerning benefits of Williamson Act farming co-ops and other agricultural information services (use City of Davis and other actively pro-agricultural cities as a reference) (page 78).

Encourage County and other agricultural service agencies to investigate environmental problems caused in agricultural areas such as insect and pest infestation due to fallow fields (page 78).

Maintain integrity of agriculture by buffering it from urban and suburban uses (page 78).

APPENDIX B

Factors LAFCOs* Must Consider When Reviewing Proposals

The Knox-Nisbet Act specifies eight factors that LAFCOs must consider when reviewing proposals:

1. Population, population density; land area and land use; per capita assessed valuation; topography, natural boundaries, and drainage basins; proximity to other populated areas; the likelihood of significant growth in the area, and in adjacent incorporated and unincorporated areas, during the next ten years.
2. Need for organized community services; the present cost and adequacy of governmental services and controls in the area; probable future needs for such services and controls; probable effect of the proposed incorporation, formation, annexation or exclusion and of alternative courses of action on the cost and adequacy of service and controls in the area and adjacent areas.
3. The effect of the proposed action and of alternative actions on adjacent areas, on mutual social and economic interests, and on the local government structure of the County.
4. The definiteness and certainty of the boundaries of the territory, the nonconformance of proposed boundaries with lines of assessment or ownership, the creation of islands or corridors of unincorporated territory, and other similar matters affecting the proposed boundaries.
5. Conformity with appropriate city or county general and specific plans.

* Local Agency Formation Commissions

6. The conformity of both the proposal and its anticipated effects with the adopted commission policies on providing planned, orderly, efficient patterns of urban development.
7. The effect of the proposed on maintaining the physical and economic integrity of lands in an agricultural pressure in open space uses.
8. The "sphere of influence" of any local agency which may be applicable to the proposal being reviewed.

Land Classification Definitions of the Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program

Source: Advisory Guidelines for the Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program
(California Department of Conservation, Division of Land Resource
Protection, April, 1984)

NOTE: The definitions in Sections 201, 202, 203, 204, and 206 are derived from the USDA Soil Conservation Service Important Farmland Inventory System, formerly called Land Inventory and Monitoring System. Each of the definitions has been modified in these guidelines to clarify its application to California. A list of qualifying soil types is available. Future amendments by the Soil Conservation Service of the Important Farmland inventory System definitions shall not constitute an amendment to the definitions set forth herein. The definitions in Section 205, 207, and 208 are required by Section 65570 of the California Government Code.

Section 201 Prime Farmland

"Prime Farmland" is land which has the best combination of physical and chemical characteristics for the production of crops. It has the soil quality, growing season and moisture supply needed to produce sustained high yields of crops when treated and managed, including water management, according to current farming methods. "Prime Farmland" must have been used for the production of irrigated crops within the last three years. It does not include publicly owned lands for which there is an adopted policy preventing agricultural use.

a. Water

The soils have xeric⁽¹⁾, ustic⁽²⁾, or aridic (torric)⁽³⁾, moisture regimes⁽⁴⁾ in which the available water capacity is at least 4.0 inches (10 cm) per 40 to 60 inches (1.01 to 1.52 meters) of soil, and a developed irrigation water supply that is dependable and of adequate quality. A dependable water supply is one which is available for the production of the commonly grown crops in 8 out of 10 years; and

NOTE: The following footnote definitions are derived from more detailed and technical definitions in "Soil Taxonomy", U.S.D.A. Agricultural Handbook 436, pp. 54-57 and pp. 62-63.

- (1) Xeric soil moisture regime - typically found in Mediterranean climates where winters are moist and cool, and summers are warm and dry.
- (2) Ustic soil moisture regime - involves the concept of limited, but effective, soil moisture. Though implying dryness, moisture is available at a time when conditions are suitable for plant growth.
- (3) Aridic (torric) soil moisture regime - soils with this moisture regime are generally found in arid climates with hot and dry summers.
- (4) Soil moisture regimes are used in defining soil classes at various levels in the soil taxonomy system.

b. Soil Temperature Range

The soils have a temperature regime⁽⁵⁾ that is frigid⁽⁶⁾, mesic⁽⁷⁾, thermic⁽⁸⁾, or hyperthermic⁽⁹⁾ (pergelic⁽¹⁰⁾ and cryic⁽¹¹⁾ regimes are excluded). These are soils that, at a depth of 20 inches (50.8 cm), have a mean annual temperature higher than 32°F (0°C). In addition, the mean summer temperature at this depth in soils with an O horizon is higher than 47°F (8°C); in soils that have no O horizon, the mean summer temperature is higher than 59°F (15°C); and

c. Acid-Alkali Balance

The soils have a pH⁽¹²⁾ between 4.5 and 8.4 in all horizons within a depth of 40 inches (1.01 meter); and

-
- (5) Soil temperature regimes are used in defining soil classes at various levels in the soil taxonomy system.
 - (6) Frigid - Mean annual soil temperature is less than 8°C (47°F), and the difference between mean winter and mean summer temperature is more than 5°C (41°F).
 - (7) Mesic - Mean annual soil temperature is 8°C (47°F) or higher, but lower than 15°C (59°F), and the difference between mean summer and mean winter soil temperature is more than 5°C (41°F).
 - (8) Thermic - the mean annual soil temperature is 15°C (59°F) or higher, but lower than 22°C (72°F), and the difference between mean summer and mean winter soil temperature is more than 5°C (41°F).
 - (9) Hyperthermic - The mean annual soil temperature is 22°C (72°F) or higher, and the difference between mean summer and mean winter soil temperature is more than 5°C (41°F).
 - (10) Pergelic - The mean annual soil temperature is lower than 0°C (32°F).
 - (11) Cryic - The mean annual temperature is higher than 0°C (32°F), but lower than 8°C (47°F).
 - (12) pH- a 14 point system used for measuring levels of acid and alkali in most substances, such as soil. Acids are at the lower end of the scale.

d. Water Table

The soils have no water table or have a water table that is maintained at a sufficient depth during the cropping season to allow cultivated crops common to the area to be grown; and

e. Soil Sodium Content

The soils can be managed so that, in all horizons within a depth of 40 inches (1.01 meter), during part of each year the conductivity of the saturation extract is less than 4 mmhos/cm⁽¹³⁾ and the exchangeable sodium percentage is less than 15; and

f. Flooding

Flooding of the soil (uncontrolled runoff from natural precipitation) during the growing season occurs infrequently, taking place less often than once every two years; and

g. Erodibility

The product of K (erodibility factor) x percent of slope is less than 2.0; and

(13) mmhos/cm - a unit of electrical conductivity, which is a measure of the salinity of soil.

h. Permeability

The soils have a permeability⁽¹⁴⁾ rate of at least 0.06 inch (0.15 cm) per hour in the upper 20 inches (50.8 cm) and the mean annual soil temperature at a depth of 20 inches (50.8 cm) is less than 59°F (15°C); the permeability rate is not a limiting factor if the mean annual soil temperature is 59°F (15°C) or higher; and

i. Rock Fragment Content

Less than 10 percent of the upper 6 inches (15.24 cm) in these soils consists of rock fragments coarser than 3 inches (7.62 cm); and

j. Rooting Depth

The soils have a minimum rooting depth of 40 inches (1 meter).

Section 202

Farmland of Statewide Importance

"Farmland of Statewide Importance" is land other than "Prime Farmland" which has a good combination of physical and chemical characteristics for the production of crops. It must have been used for the production of irrigated crops within the last three years. It does

(14) The ease with which water passes through soil.

not include publically owned lands for which there is an adopted policy preventing agricultural use.

Section 202.1 "Farmland of Statewide Importance" must meet all the following criteria:

a. Water

The soils have xeric, ustic, or aridic torric,⁽¹⁵⁾ moisture regimes in which the available water capacity is at least 3.5 inches (8.89 cm) per 40 to 60 inches (1.01 to 1.52 meters) of soil. They have a developed irrigation supply that is dependable and of adequate quality. A dependable water supply is one which is available for the production of the commonly grown crops in 8 out of 10 years; and

b. Soil Temperature Range

The soils have a temperature regime that is frigid, mesic, thermic, or hyperthermic (pergelic and cryic⁽¹⁶⁾ regimes are excluded). These are soils that, at a depth of 20 inches (50.8 cm), have a mean annual temperature higher than 32° F (0°C). In addition, the mean summer temperature at this depth in soils with

(15) The technical soil terms footnoted here are those found in the "Prime Farmland" Section (201.1). See footnotes 1-12.

(16) Ibid.

an O horizon is higher than 47°F (8°C); in soils that have no O horizon, the mean summer temperature is higher than 59°F (15°C); and

c. Acid-Alkali Balance

The soils have a pH⁽¹⁷⁾ between 4.5 and 9.0 in all horizons within a depth of 40 inches (1.01 meter) or in the root zone if the root zone is less than 40 inches deep; and

d. Water Table

The soils have no water table or have a water table that is maintained at a sufficient depth during the cropping season to allow cultivated crops common to the area to be grown; and

e. Soil Sodium Content

The soils can be managed so that, in all horizons within a depth of 40 inches (1.01 meter), or in the root zone if the root zone is less than 40 inches (1.01 meter) deep; during part of each year the conductivity of the saturation extract is less than 16 mmhos/cm⁽¹⁸⁾ and the exchangeable sodium percentage is less than 25; and

(17) The technical soil terms footnoted here are those found in the "Prime Farmland" Section (201.1). See footnotes 1-12.

(18) mmhos/cm - a unit of electrical conductivity, which is a measure of the salinity of soil.

f. Flooding

Flooding of the soil (uncontrolled runoff from natural precipitation) during the growing season occurs infrequently, taking place less often than once every two years; and

g. Erodibility

The product of K (erodibility factor) x percent of slope is less than 3.0; and

h. Rock Fragment Content

Less than 10 percent of the upper 6 inches (15.24 cm) in these soils consists of rock fragments coarser than 3 inches (7.62 cm).

Section 203

Unique Farmland

"Unique Farmland" is land which does not meet the criteria for "Prime Farmland" or "Farmland of Statewide Importance," that is currently used for the production of specific high economic value crops. It has the special combination of soil quality, location, growing season and moisture supply needed to produce sustained high quality or high yields of a specific crop when treated and managed according to current farming methods. Examples of such crops may include oranges, olives, avocados, rice, grapes, and cut flowers. It does not include publically owned lands for which there is an adopted policy preventing agricultural use.

Section 203.1

Characteristically Unique Farmland:

- a. Is used for specific high value crops (See Sec. 203.2); and
- b. Has a moisture supply that is adequate for the specific crop; the supply is from stored moisture, precipitation, or a developed irrigation system; and
- c. Combines favorable factors of soil quality, growing season, temperature, humidity, air drainage, elevation, exposure, or other conditions, such as nearness to market, that favor growth of a specific food or fiber crop; and
- d. Excludes abandoned orchards or vineyards and extremely low yielding crops, as determined in consultation with the County Cooperative Extension Director and Agricultural Commissioner.

Section 203.2

High-value crops are listed in California Agriculture, the annual report of the California Department of Food and Agriculture. The Department of Conservation maintains a current list of the crops which qualify land as Unique Farmland. In order for land to be classified Unique Farmland, the crop grown on the land must have qualified for the list in the last three years.

Section 204

Farmland of Local Importance

"Farmland of Local Importance" is either currently producing crops, or has the capability of production. "Farmland of Local Importance"

is land other than "Prime Farmland," "Farmland of Statewide Importance," or "Unique Farmland." This land may be important to the local economy due to its productivity. It does not include publically owned lands for which there is an adopted policy preventing agricultural use.

Section 204.1 "Farmland of Local Importance" was initially identified by a local advisory committee convened in each county by the Soil Conservation Service. Authority to recommend changes to the category of "Farmland of Local Importance" shall rest with the board of supervisors in each county. The Department shall present each draft map to the board of supervisors for their review. After the presentation of a draft map by the Department, the board of supervisors shall have a 60-day review period in which to request any needed modifications. An extension may be granted upon request. The county supervisors may then approve or not approve the "Farmland of Local Importance" category of the map. The Department will accept the recommendation of the board of supervisors if it is consistent with Section 204.

Section 204.2 The Department will note the action of the board of supervisors on the Important Farmland Series map for each county.

Section 205 Grazing Land

"Grazing Land" is defined in Section 65570(b)(2) of the Government Code as:

"...land on which the existing vegetation, whether grown naturally or through management, is suitable for grazing or browsing of livestock."

The minimum mapping unit for "Grazing Land" is 40 acres.

Section 205.1 "Grazing Land" does not include land previously designated as "Prime Farmland," "Farmland of Statewide Importance," "Unique Farmland" or "Farmland of Local Importance," and heavily brushed, timbered, excessively steep, or rocky lands which restrict the access and movement of livestock.

Section 205.2 The Department will convene a grazing land advisory committee in each project county to help identify grazing lands. The committees will consist of members of the local livestock ranching community, livestock ranching organizations, and the Cooperative Extension livestock farm advisor. The Department will work with the president of the local Cattlemen's Association and the Cooperative Extension livestock farm advisor in selecting members of these committees.

Section 206 Urban and Built-Up Land

"Urban and Built-up Land" is used for residential, industrial, commercial, construction, institutional, public administrative purposes, railroad yards, cemeteries, airports, golf courses, sanitary landfills, sewage treatment plants, water control structures, and other development purposes. Highways, railroads, and other transportation facilities are mapped as a part of Urban and Built-up Land if they are a part of the surrounding urban areas.

The minimum mapping unit is ten acres. Units of land smaller than ten acres will be incorporated into the surrounding map classifications. The building density for residential use must be at least one structure per 1.5 acres (or approximately 6 structures per 10 acres). "Urban and Built-up Land" must contain man-made structures or the infrastructure required for development (e.g., paved roads, sewers, water, electricity, or in specific circumstances, drainage or flood control facilities) that are specifically designed to serve that land. Parking lots, storage and distribution facilities, and industrial uses such as large packing operations for agricultural produce will generally be mapped as "Urban and Built-up Land," even though they are associated with agriculture.

"Urban and Built-up Land" does not include strip mines, borrow pits, gravel pits, farmsteads, ranch headquarters, commercial feedlots, greenhouses, poultry facilities, and road systems for freeway interchanges outside of areas classified as "Urban and Built-up Land" areas.

Section 206.1

Within areas classified as "Urban and Built-up Land" areas, vacant and nonagricultural land which is surrounded on all sides by urban development and is 40 acres or less in size will be mapped as "Urban and Built-up." Vacant and nonagricultural land larger than 40 acres in size will be mapped as "Other Land."

Section 207

Other Land

"Other Land" is that which is not included in any of the other mapping categories. The following types of land are generally included:

- a. rural development which has a building density of less than one structure per 1.5 acres, but with at least one structure per ten acres;
- b. marginal agricultural lands;
- c. brush, timber and other lands not suitable for livestock grazing;
- d. government lands not available for agricultural use;
- e. road systems for freeway interchanges outside of "Urban and Built-up Land" areas;
- f. Vacant and nonagricultural land larger than 40 acres in size and surrounded on all sides by urban development;
- g. a variety of other rural land uses.

Section 208

Land Committed to Nonagricultural Use

"Land Committed to a Nonagricultural Use" is land that is permanently committed by local elected officials to nonagricultural development by virtue of decisions which cannot be reversed simply by a majority vote of a city council or county board of supervisors.

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